

Childers Tours First District with USDA Officials

Wednesday, July 7, 2010

Washington, DC – Today, U.S. Rep. Travis Childers (MS-01) hosted a First District tour with U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) officials to help them gain a better understanding of Mississippi's agriculture industry and the great contributions it makes to jobs and the economy. The tour included stops in Holly Springs and Southaven.

"I'm so pleased to have had USDA officials from Washington, which included Under Secretary Dallas Tonsager, here to visit the First District today," said Childers. "It's important that these officials come to North Mississippi to see first-hand how critical our rural communities are to job creation and economic growth throughout the region. In December, USDA Deputy Under Secretary Michael Scuse toured the district with me to assess the needs of farming communities hit hard by last fall's heavy rains and flooding, and I'm honored that the USDA has once again accepted my invitation to visit the district."

"The ICS management staff welcomed today's visit by Congressman Travis Childers and staff, USDA officials, and local officials as we shared plans for a new state-of-the-art Head Start center in Crenshaw, Miss," said Eloise McClinton, Executive Director of ICS. "The eight-classroom facility will enhance not only the community, but also the children who will enter the doors to learn and move further in their educational pursuits as we continue our efforts in Making Small Miracles a Great Success."

"We are grateful to Congressman Childers for arranging this opportunity for our researchers to discuss priorities with the USDA undersecretaries," said University of Mississippi Chancellor Dan Jones. "We have long-standing partnerships with USDA and look forward to working with them to further their mission throughout Mississippi and the nation."

Participating USDA officials included Under Secretary for Rural Development (RD) Dallas Tonsager, Legislative Director for RD Jacqueline Davis-Slay, Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) State Conservationist Dr. Homer L. Wilkes, and RD Director Trina George.

The first stop in the tour was a visit to the ICS Head Start headquarters in Holly Springs to discuss an RD Community Facilities Program loan of \$780,000 and grant of \$350,000 under the *American Recovery and Reinvestment Act* for a new Head Start facility in Crenshaw.

Next, Childers and the USDA officials visited Cheeseman Farm, also in Holly Springs, which participates in NRCS's Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP). EQIP was reauthorized in the 2008 Farm Bill, with Childers' support, to provide a voluntary conservation program for farmers and ranchers that promotes agricultural production and environmental quality as compatible national goals. EQIP offers financial and technical help to assist eligible participants install or implement structural and management practices on eligible agricultural land.

The group completed their tour in Southaven at a meeting with local elected officials and producers to discuss the various programs that RD and NRCS have to offer, and how these programs can help North Mississippi communities continue to grow and prosper.

A pro-gun, pro-life Mississippian, Congressman Travis Childers (MS-01) represents the First Congressional District in North Mississippi. He is a member of the fiscally conservative Blue Dog Coalition and serves on the House Agriculture and Financial Services Committee. Congressman Childers co-chairs the reestablished bipartisan Congressional Rural Caucus and was appointed to the bipartisan Second Amendment Task Force. For more information, visit www.childers.house.gov